



MODEL OF INTANGIBLE HERITAGE CURATION OF THE CINA BENTENG COMMUNITY: A PRESERVATION STUDY AT BOEN TEK BIO

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Abstrak:

Pelestarian warisan budaya takbenda menjadi aspek krusial dalam menjaga kesinambungan identitas komunitas di tengah arus modernisasi dan perubahan sosial. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis model kurasi budaya takbenda yang diterapkan oleh Perkumpulan Boen Tek Bio dalam upaya mempertahankan tradisi, ritual, cerita lisan, dan ekspresi budaya komunitas Tionghoa Benteng di Tangerang. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan metode studi kasus, penelitian ini mengumpulkan data melalui wawancara terstruktur, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumen komunitas. Data dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola kurasi, dinamika partisipasi komunitas, serta faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi keberlanjutan praktik budaya takbenda. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kurasi budaya takbenda di Boen Tek Bio dilakukan melalui pelestarian ritual tradisional seperti Gotong Toapekong dan Peh Cun, pewarisan cerita mitologi komunitas, serta revitalisasi seni pertunjukan seperti lagu-lagu rakyat berakar budaya Tionghoa. Pelibatan komunitas lintas generasi, dukungan struktur organisasi, serta adaptasi terbatas terhadap teknologi digital menjadi faktor kunci dalam menjaga keberlangsungan tradisi. Tantangan utama yang dihadapi meliputi minimnya regenerasi pengetahuan budaya dan pengaruh modernisasi terhadap minat generasi muda. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya model kurasi partisipatif dan berbasis nilai komunitas dalam pelestarian warisan budaya takbenda, serta membuka peluang pengembangan pendekatan kurasi digital sebagai strategi adaptif ke depan.

Kata Kunci : Budaya takbenda, Kurasi komunitas, Pelestarian budaya, Cina Benteng, Boen Tek Bio, Studi kasus

Abstract:

The preservation of intangible cultural heritage plays a crucial role in maintaining the continuity of community identity amid modernization and social change. This study aims to analyze the community curation model applied by the Boen Tek Bio Association in sustaining the traditions, rituals, oral histories, and cultural expressions of the Cina Benteng community in Tangerang, Indonesia. Using a qualitative approach and case study method, data were collected through structured interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns of curation, community participation dynamics, and factors influencing the sustainability of intangible cultural practices. The findings reveal that the curation of intangible heritage at Boen Tek Bio is conducted through the preservation of traditional rituals such as Gotong Toapekong and Peh Cun, the transmission of mythological stories, and the revitalization of traditional performing arts such as folk songs with Chinese-Malay influences. Active community involvement across generations, organizational support structures, and the limited adaptation to digital technology are key factors in maintaining these traditions. The main challenges identified include the lack of intergenerational cultural knowledge transfer and the decreasing interest among younger generations due to modernization. This study underscores the importance of participatory and community-based curation models in preserving intangible cultural heritage and highlights the potential of developing digital curation strategies as an adaptive response for the future.

Keywords : Intangible cultural heritage, Community curation, Cultural preservation, Cina Benteng, Boen Tek Bio, Case study

PENDAHULUAN

Intangible cultural heritage is a crucial component in preserving the social identity and continuity of a community. According to UNESCO in Batista, et al. (2022), intangible cultural heritage includes practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills along with instruments, objects, artifacts, and associated cultural spaces that communities, groups, and sometimes individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. In the context of the Cina

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Benteng community in Tangerang, preserving intangible culture is vital to maintaining a unique cultural identity amid the rapid dynamics of modernization and social change.

The Boen Tek Bio Association, as one of the oldest cultural and religious centers in Tangerang, plays a significant role in preserving various intangible cultural traditions of the Cina Benteng community. Established in 1684, Boen Tek Bio is not only a place of worship but also a living cultural space where traditions, rituals, oral stories, and performing arts are passed down through generations. Traditions such as Gotong Toapekong, Peh Cun, and Ceng Beng, as well as artistic expressions like Chinese-Malay folk songs and pantun, are integral parts of this community's life. However, in the era of globalization and rapid modernization, intangible cultural heritage faces numerous challenges. Changes in social values, modern lifestyles, and the declining interest of younger generations in local traditions threaten the continuity of intangible culture. Conversely, opportunities for cultural preservation have emerged through technological innovations, such as the digitization of cultural heritage and the use of online platforms for cultural promotion.

It is essential to understand how the community curation model at Boen Tek Bio functions to identify, preserve, and transmit the intangible cultural heritage of the Cina Benteng community. Community curation here is understood as a social process in which community members actively engage in selecting, caring for, and presenting their cultural heritage to future generations and the broader public. This study aims to reveal how traditions and intangible cultural practices are maintained, who the main actors in the curation process are, and how the community adapts to modernization challenges without losing cultural essence. The study also explores the potential development of a more adaptive and participatory curation model, including the utilization of digital technology as a preservation strategy.

The research focuses on the practice of curating intangible cultural heritage within the Boen Tek Bio community, covering traditions, rituals, oral histories, and artistic expressions. This research adds to the existing knowledge about how local communities can preserve their intangible cultural heritage, helping to create theories about community-based curation that reflect local cultural values. It also provides practical recommendations for the Boen Tek Bio community and similar communities in developing preservation models and serves as a reference for local governments, academics, and cultural institutions in designing community-based cultural preservation programs.

The structure of this paper is organized as follows: Introduction; Literature Review, which provides the theoretical framework for intangible cultural heritage, community curation, cultural participation, and modernization challenges; Research Methodology, detailing the approach, type of research, data collection techniques, data analysis techniques, and validation; The Results and Discussion section presents the field findings, thematic analysis, and mapping of the curation model, while the Conclusion and Recommendations section summarizes the research results and provides suggestions for sustaining intangible cultural heritage.





METODE PENELITIAN

This study adopts a qualitative research approach with an case study design. The qualitative approach is chosen to explore in-depth the meanings, experiences, and social processes surrounding the curation of intangible cultural heritage within the Boen Tek Bio community. The intrinsic case study method is appropriate because the research is centered on a specific case Boen Tek Bio, which holds particular interest due to its unique cultural and historical context. The goal is not to generalize findings to other settings but to develop a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics within this particular community.

We collected data through structured interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. Structured interviews allowed for a flexible yet focused exploration of informant perspectives, including curator to representing community. We developed an interview guide based on themes such as tradition preservation, community participation, and adaptation to modernization. Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes and was recorded with the participants' consent.

Participatory observation was carried out by attending key cultural events organized by Boen Tek Bio, including the Gotong Toapekong procession, Peh Cun festival, and Ceng Beng ceremonies. During these events, detailed field notes were taken to capture the interactions, rituals, and performances that exemplify the living practices of intangible heritage. The researcher maintained a balance between participation and observation to gain an insider's view while retaining analytical distance.

Document analysis was used to complement the primary data, focusing on internal documents of Boen Tek Bio such as event records, meeting minutes, promotional materials, and digital archives. Publicly available documents, such as local government reports and media coverage related to Cina Benteng cultural preservation, were also reviewed to triangulate findings. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, several validation strategies were employed. Triangulation of data sources—interviews, observations, and documents—was conducted to corroborate evidence across different methods.

This methodological framework ensures a comprehensive and contextually grounded analysis of the practices and challenges associated with the curation of intangible heritage within the Boen Tek Bio community. By deeply engaging with the lived experiences and cultural practices of the community, this study contributes meaningful insights into the preservation of intangible cultural heritage in local settings facing the pressures of modernization.

HASIL PENELITIAN DAN PEMBAHASAN

The findings of this research reveal several key dimensions of intangible heritage curation practiced by the Boen Tek Bio community. Based on interviews, observations, and document analysis, curation practices



can be organized into six main themes: ritual and ceremonial practices, oral traditions and collective memory, religious practices and acculturation, cultural expression through music and art, community participation and intergenerational transmission, and adaptation through digital initiatives.

Ritual and Ceremonial Practices

The Boen Tek Bio ritual calendar is rich and symbolically meaningful. Boen Tek Bio continues to celebrate core rituals such as Gotong Toapekong, held every twelve years, and Peh Cun (Festival Perahu Naga), annually. Gotong Toapekong involves a procession of sacred statues through the streets, symbolizing renewal and communal protection. The Peh Cun Festival, accompanied by boat races and offerings, combines ancestor worship with communal celebration. Other important rituals include the "Sembahyang Rebutan," which involves competitive offerings to receive blessings, and Ceng Beng, a festival for sweeping ancestral graves. These ceremonies embody what Assmann (2012) conceptualized as "cultural memory," which are practices that bind society through shared symbols and collective memories. Each ritual preserves religious elements and reaffirms social cohesion. Rituals function as temporal anchors, connecting the current generation with their ancestors' past. The continuity of these ceremonies demonstrates the community's and society's commitment to maintaining traditional structures despite external modernization pressures.

Oral Tradition and Collective Memory

The oral transmission of myths, legends, and historical narratives remains a key feature of heritage curation at Boen Tek Bio. During communal gatherings and rituals, people share stories about holy figures, the origins of rituals, and tales of perseverance during the colonial era. As Halbwachs (1976) stated, collective memory is built and maintained socially through communal activities. The narrative tradition of Boen Tek Bio is an example of this theory. This oral tradition strengthens group identity and conveys values such as loyalty, filial piety, and communal solidarity. However, challenges arise as the younger generation increasingly distances itself from this narrative and prefers modern entertainment formats. Addressing this gap requires innovative strategies to document and disseminate oral history in engaging digital formats.

An integral part of the oral tradition that reinforces collective identity is the Cio Tao tradition, a unique marriage custom for the Cina Benteng community. Cio Tao encompasses a blend of ancestral respect, symbolic rituals, and community solidarity during wedding ceremonies. Through ritual performances and storytelling, the community passes down the meaning of Cio Tao, including its distinctive costumes, musical accompaniment, and series of ceremonies. As part of heritage curation, the Cio Tao tradition not only marks personal milestones but also strengthens communal bonds and reaffirms the timeless cultural narrative that connects the current generation with their ancestors. Keeping these detailed traditions alive needs careful

recording and new methods that involve the community and use digital tools, making sure that these rich cultural practices can adapt as society changes.

Religious practice and Acculturation

Religious practices at Boen Tek Bio reflect a complex and layered process of cultural acculturation, deeply intertwined with the historical evolution of the Cina Benteng community in Tangerang. Worship rituals at Boen Tek Bio blend elements from Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, all adapted to fit the socio-cultural realities of the local environment. Offerings during rituals—such as white rice wine, clear water, candles, and incense—are chosen not merely for their material simplicity but for their profound symbolic resonance, intended to honor the guardian spirits, deities, and ancestral presences associated particularly with natural features like the Cisadane River.

This syncretism is not accidental but an adaptive strategy developed over centuries, reflecting both the flexibility and resilience of the Cina Benteng identity. As Muhammad et al. (2023) have observed, the Cina Benteng community stands apart from other Chinese Indonesian groups in its openness to cultural fusion while maintaining strong commitments to core ancestral traditions. In Boen Tek Bio, for instance, Buddhist prayers might be chanted in combination with Confucian reverence rituals and Taoist symbolic offerings during the same ceremonial event. Such blending ensures that religious practices remain meaningful and functional across generations.

Central to these practices is the worship of "Datuk," or guardian spirits, often linked to local geographical features, such as rivers and forests. Offerings of white wine, incense, and simple fruits during ceremonies directed to the "penunggu" (guardians) embody a belief system that recognizes the spirit world as immanent in the local landscape. This practice reflects a significant degree of localization of traditional Chinese spiritual cosmology, which in its original form might have been more centered on imperial deities and urban temple networks.

The adaptation of religious symbolism can also be seen in the material culture of worship. The use of simple, locally available materials for offerings, rather than elaborate imported goods, signals a pragmatic adjustment while maintaining ritual efficacy. They emphasize the act of offering itself—its sincerity and intent—above the extravagance of its physical representation. This mirrors the broader philosophy of many syncretic religious traditions, where context-sensitive adaptation is key to survival and relevance.

Furthermore, ritual timing and spatial organization at Boen Tek Bio demonstrate acculturation. Major rituals are often scheduled in alignment with broader Indonesian public holidays or local community calendars, ensuring maximum community participation. The temple spaces, while retaining Chinese architectural motifs,

also incorporate Indonesian decorative elements and local craftsmanship, providing a visible testament to centuries of cultural blending.

Generational transmission of these practices is handled delicately. Elders play a crucial role in mentoring younger members, explaining the layered meanings behind ritual actions and the historical reasons for certain adaptations. For example, while some younger members might question the need for offering white rice wine (arak putih), elders explain its historical significance as a symbol of purity and its traditional association with bridging the human and spirit worlds.

Another important dimension is the community's strategic use of ritual language. While traditional Chinese dialects like Hokkien were once dominant during ceremonies, Bahasa Indonesia now increasingly serves as the lingua franca during explanations and communal announcements. This linguistic shift ensures broader comprehension among the younger generations, many of whom are more fluent in Indonesian than in traditional dialects, without abandoning the original ritual scripts.

The community's approach aligns with broader trends in religious syncretism observed in diaspora communities globally, where cultural practices must continuously negotiate between ancestral fidelity and contemporary relevance. The pragmatic adaptations made at Boen Tek Bio reflect a conscious strategy to preserve not just ritual forms, but their underlying meanings and social functions.

Moreover, the rituals are not only about maintaining a connection with the divine but also serve critical social functions. They reinforce group identity, mark community milestones, and facilitate social bonding across family lineages and age cohorts. Events such as Gotong Toapekong or Peh Cun, while spiritual in origin, have become important socio-cultural events where religious devotion, cultural pride, and communal solidarity converge.

In terms of challenges, the Boen Tek Bio community faces pressures common to many traditional religious groups: the secularization of youth, competing modern lifestyles, and a reduced depth of ritual knowledge among younger practitioners. However, the community's adaptive strategies—such as simplifying rituals without losing core symbolic meanings and incorporating digital technologies for broader outreach—illustrate a proactive stance rather than passive resistance.

Religious festivals are increasingly accompanied by educational programs, exhibitions, and digital content creation aimed at making rituals more accessible and understandable to a technologically savvy generation. This move is critical to countering the trend of ritual detachment and ensuring that practices remain lived experiences rather than merely nostalgic performances. The practice of curating religious rituals at Boen Tek Bio thus represents a vibrant example of what Dobрева and Duff (2015) refer to as "dynamic

digital curation"—the" continuous reinterpretation, recontextualization, and re-presentation of cultural practices to meet the evolving needs of a community. In conclusion, religious practices at Boen Tek Bio are emblematic of a sophisticated cultural negotiation process. By blending Buddhist, Confucian, Taoist, and local Indonesian elements and by adjusting ritual forms and languages without abandoning their essential meanings, the community maintains a living, breathing heritage. Their model of acculturation ensures that faith, culture, and identity are not relics of the past but active, evolving forces that continue to shape communal life in a rapidly changing world.

Cultural Expression through Music and art.

Music and performing arts constitute dynamic and deeply embedded dimensions of intangible cultural heritage at Boen Tek Bio. Far from being merely ornamental, musical traditions here perform critical roles in the transmission of historical memory, the reinforcement of communal bonds, and the expression of syncretic identity formed through centuries of cultural interaction between Chinese migrants and local Indonesian communities. Among the most prominent traditional musical forms preserved are "lagu dalem," "semargunem," "poasilitan," and "mawar tumpah." These songs are not random compositions but are historically rooted pieces that weave together Chinese pentatonic tonal structures with Malay lyrical narratives. The resulting musical forms are neither purely Chinese nor solely Malay; rather, they embody a hybrid aesthetic reflective of the Cina Benteng experience of cultural negotiation and synthesis.

"Lagu dalem," for instance, is typically performed in a slow, melancholic tone, often accompanying ceremonial events that commemorate historical figures or ancestral spirits. "Semargunem" and "poasilitan" incorporate livelier rhythms and are usually played during community festivals such as Peh Cun, creating a festive atmosphere that enhances social cohesion. "Mawar tumpah" is notable for its lyrical emphasis on moral virtues like loyalty, filial piety, and honesty—values central to the Cina Benteng communal ethos. The performance of these songs during major celebrations and communal gatherings ensures that they remain living traditions, rather than relics of the past. The act of singing and listening collectively reaffirms group identity and reinforces a shared sense of belonging, particularly important for a minority community navigating its place within a pluralistic society.

The revitalization of these musical traditions through initiatives like the Cina Benteng Cultural Studies Center marks a significant institutional effort to safeguard and promote intangible cultural heritage. By organizing musical workshops, public performances, and academic discussions, the center seeks not only to preserve these art forms but also to reposition them within the contemporary cultural imagination. This aligns with Mutibwa et al.'s (2020) observation that community-led cultural engagements play a vital role in ensuring

the resilience of intangible heritage amid changing social landscapes.

Nevertheless, the transmission of traditional music at Boen Tek Bio is not without its challenges. A particularly notable aspect is the adherence to symbolic taboos within musical practices. For example, the musical note "Fa" is consciously avoided in certain performances because its pronunciation closely resembles "si," the Hokkien term for death. This sensitivity to linguistic and musical nuances illustrates the intricate relationship between language, belief systems, and artistic expression within the community. It highlights how even subtle elements of musical performance are imbued with cultural meanings that must be carefully managed to uphold ritual integrity and communal respect. Moreover, Boen Tek Bio deeply integrates music into significant life-cycle ceremonies, including weddings (via Cio Tao rituals) and funerals. Traditional songs are thoughtfully adapted to reflect the emotional atmosphere of each occasion—joyous melodies accompany celebrations of union, while solemn compositions honor those who have passed. This adaptability ensures that music remains a vital component of the community's ceremonial traditions, continually reinforcing its cultural relevance across generations.

Technological adaptation is another notable development. Recognizing the challenges posed by generational shifts and changing musical tastes, efforts are underway to digitize traditional musical performances. Audio recordings, video archives, and online streaming of traditional song performances are being explored as means to engage younger audiences who might otherwise be disconnected from these art forms. As Dobрева and Duff (2015) suggest, effective digital curation strategies are critical to ensuring that cultural content remains accessible, relevant, and meaningful across generational divides. The use of digital platforms not only broadens access but also opens possibilities for creative reinterpretations. Young musicians from the Cina Benteng community are experimenting with fusions that blend traditional melodies with contemporary genres like pop and jazz, thereby creating new forms of cultural expression that resonate with modern sensibilities while maintaining links to ancestral roots. This dynamic evolution mirrors the broader trend observed in other diaspora communities, where cultural forms are continuously reimagined to fit new social realities without abandoning core values. Despite these innovations, challenges persist. There is a risk that commercial pressures could lead to the commodification or superficial appropriation of traditional music, stripping it of its deeper cultural and spiritual meanings. To mitigate this risk, community elders, cultural practitioners, and institutions like the Cina Benteng Cultural Studies Center emphasize the importance of context-sensitive performance, cultural education, and community ownership over heritage expressions.

Community Participation and Intergenerational Transmission

The preservation of Boen Tek Bio's cultural heritage is fundamentally rooted in a participatory model that

emphasizes collective engagement across all levels of the community. The governance structure, formalized through the organization's articles of association (AD/ART), provides a systematic framework that facilitates active community involvement in a range of religious, educational, and cultural activities. This participatory model ensures that heritage preservation is not a top-down process but a communal effort where different generations contribute according to their capacities.

Festivals such as the Cisadane Festival serve as important public platforms where the richness of the community's intangible heritage is showcased to a broader audience. Through vibrant processions, traditional performances, and ritual demonstrations, Boen Tek Bio celebrates its cultural identity internally and projects it outward, reinforcing cultural pride and enhancing public appreciation. Such public engagements are critical in strengthening communal bonds and affirming the community's place within the multicultural tapestry of Indonesian society.

A particularly strategic element of Boen Tek Bio's participatory approach lies in its educational initiatives. Recognizing that the sustainability of cultural heritage hinges on youth engagement, Boen Tek Bio has invested significantly in formal and informal education programs. Affiliated schools, spanning from kindergarten to higher education, integrate cultural teachings into their curricula. Students actively participate in cultural events, traditional ceremonies, and heritage-based learning modules, ensuring that knowledge of rituals, values, and historical narratives is systematically passed on.

In the context of enhancing youth involvement, Boen Tek Bio also conducts targeted educational programs for students within institutions under its management. One prominent example is Setia Bhakti School, an educational institution founded on Confucian values. Through its curriculum, Setia Bhakti not only provides general education but also instills moral teachings, traditional etiquette, and cultural consciousness rooted in Cina Benteng heritage. Setia Bhakti introduces students to rituals, traditional music, festivals, and ethical frameworks that mirror the principles upheld by the Boen Tek Bio community. This integrated educational strategy underscores the critical role of youth as custodians of heritage. By embedding cultural literacy early in their educational journey, Boen Tek Bio ensures that younger generations develop a deep emotional connection to their cultural roots while acquiring the skills necessary to adapt and reinterpret traditions for contemporary relevance. Consequently, education becomes not merely a vehicle for academic advancement but a vital instrument for cultural continuity and innovation within the Boen Tek Bio community.

KESIMPULAN

This study has examined the model of intangible cultural heritage curation practiced by the Boen Tek Bio community,



revealing a dynamic and participatory approach that adapts tradition to the challenges of contemporary life while maintaining cultural authenticity. The findings demonstrate that heritage preservation at Boen Tek Bio is a multilayered process that encompasses ritual practice, narrative transmission, religious adaptation, artistic expression, and community engagement. The ritual and ceremonial practices, such as Gotong Toapekong, Peh Cun, Sembahyang Rebutan, and Ceng Beng, function not only as religious observances but also as powerful instruments for reinforcing communal identity and intergenerational solidarity. These rituals serve as anchors that connect the present with the ancestral past, strengthening social cohesion through structured communal experiences.

Meanwhile, the oral tradition and collective memory maintained through storytelling, myths, and the transmission of cultural narratives ensure that historical experiences and values such as loyalty, filial piety, and resilience remain alive within the community. The transmission of such intangible knowledge is critical for sustaining cultural consciousness across generations, although it faces challenges from shifting media consumption habits among the youth. The religious practices and cultural changes seen at Boen Tek Bio show a clever mix of Buddhist, Confucian, and Taoist traditions that have been adjusted to fit the local Indonesian culture. This syncretism has enabled the community to remain spiritually vibrant and socially relevant across different historical epochs, affirming the Cina Benteng's distinctive approach to cultural negotiation and identity formation. Moreover, cultural expression through music and art, including traditional songs like "lagu dalem," "semargunem," and others, plays an integral role in embedding communal values into everyday life. Musical rules, meanings behind the songs, and how performances change for important events like Cio Tao weddings and funerals show how closely belief, feelings, and creativity are connected in the community's culture.

Finally, community participation and intergenerational transmission form the backbone of Boen Tek Bio's sustainability strategy. Formal education initiatives, especially through schools affiliated with the community, such as Setia Bhakti School, foster early cultural immersion among students. These efforts are complemented by community-based activities that emphasize experiential learning, ritual participation, and the cultivation of cultural pride among the youth. Synthesizing these findings, it is evident that the Boen Tek Bio community employs an integrated model of heritage curation that balances preservation and innovation. Their practices involve everyone and show that they are open to changing how they teach and use technology, which proves they have a living heritage system that can handle today's challenges while still staying connected to their ancestors. The resilience of Boen Tek Bio's intangible heritage offers an important model for other minority communities seeking to preserve their cultural identities amid the forces of globalization. Future sustainability will depend on expanding digital curation efforts, fostering broader intergenerational dialogue, and strengthening institutional collaborations, ensuring that the intangible treasures of the Cina Benteng endure for generations to come.





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